

Chicago Daily Herald

Circuit judge works on committee to increase legal aid for poor

Tony Gordon

Thursday, July 10, 2003

Circuit Judge Jane Waller is joining the fight to increase state funding of legal aid for the poor. Waller, presiding judge of the Lake County family law division and former chief judge of the 19th Judicial Circuit, is among members of a committee formed to step up Illinois' spending on assisting the poor in civil court matters.

"Illinois is last among the most populated states in funding of legal aid," Waller said. "Our most vulnerable citizens need the services and protection the court system can offer them."

The Equal Justice Illinois Campaign is headed by former Sen. Paul Simon and former Gov. James Thompson, and also includes Supreme Court Justice Mary Ann McMorrow and Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley as members.

Legal aid organizations such as Prairie State Legal Services assist the poor in landlord-tenant disputes, obtaining orders of protection and child support matters, as well as other civil court services.

Illinois spends less than \$500,000 on legal services for the poor, while the national spending average for states with this population size is \$5.4 million.

Most of the difference in this state is made up by lawyers donating their time to legal aid organizations and private donations.

Waller said the goal of increasing state aid is not unrealistic even in these troubled financial times because statistics show dollars spent on legal services can reduce state spending on other government services.

Police academy: The second class of the Lake County sheriff's Citizens Police Academy will start in September.

Deputy Michael Gregory said the 10-week course offers an insight into what police do and why they do it.

"We are not looking to transform people into deputy sheriffs; what we are looking to create is an informed public," Gregory said. "The people in the academy gain knowledge of the deputy's duties and responsibilities, and at the same time we in the sheriff's office get insight into what is on the minds of the citizens we serve."

Any resident of the county at least 21 years old and without a felony conviction is eligible

to apply for admission to the academy.

Gregory said the classes will be one night a week, probably Thursday, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. starting on a date in September not yet selected.

Classes will be at the sheriff's offices in Waukegan and Libertyville, with one special field trip to the department's training and firing range in Russell.

Enrollment is limited to around 30 people. To apply, call Gregory at (847) 377- 4211.